

Photography with Prime Lenses

André Costantini puts Tamron's two new SP prime lenses to the test to showcase his signature journalistic style.



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André Costantini, *Creative and Technical Consultant for Tamron USA*, is a photographer, filmmaker and educator. André's approach to photography and teaching is enjoyable, engaging and informative. He has taught photography seminars throughout the United States, Canada and the Caribbean and has written articles for *Studio Photography and Design* and *Shutterbug*. Clients include *American Repertory Theatre*, *Discovery Channel*, *Criterion Collection*, and *Tamron USA*.

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Primed for Performance. André Costantini puts Tamron's two new prime lenses—the SP 35mm F/1.8 VC USD and SP 45mm F/1.8 VC USD—to the test.

Pushing his artistic talents to the limit is what drives André Costantini in every facet of his work. As a photographer, filmmaker, musician, and teacher, he doesn't stop seeking out that unique angle or unusual perspective from which to share his worldview, whether he's creating documentary shorts for an NGO in Africa or capturing a close-up of his own young daughter.

As a longtime Creative and technical Consultant for Tamron, André has tapped into every tool in the Tamron lens arsenal, but there's one thing that's remained on his wish list: Tamron prime lenses. "When I started out in photography, I only had one lens," he says. "The beauty of the fixed focal length is that you're forced to think differently. You have to consider what's in the frame based on where you are in relation to the subject you're shooting. Sometimes less is more."

His wish finally came true with the recent arrival of the Tamron SP 35mm F/1.8 VC USD and SP 45mm F/1.8 VC USD lenses. "In addition to the fast F/1.8 maximum aperture, these two lenses have image stabilization, extremely close-focusing and are incredibly sharp," André says.

Although both the 35mm and the 45mm are full-frame lenses, Tamron designed them with both APS-C and full-frame shooters in mind. "Basically, the 35mm is close to a 'normal' lens on an APS-C, and the 45mm is a 'normal' lens on a full-frame," André explains. "For the technically minded, the 'normal lens' on any camera is the diagonal distance of whatever size the media is. That's why I love the 35mm lens on a full-frame camera. It's a wider-angle lens, which is ideal as a walk-around lens to capture people and scenes in a journalistic style."

"In addition to the fast F/1.8 maximum aperture, these two lenses have image stabilization, extremely close-focusing and are incredibly sharp."



Models F012 (left) & F013 (right)
for Canon, Nikon and Sony DSLRs

**LENS USED:**

SP 45mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/1.8, 1/30th sec.

TITLE:

Oh, Baby

TIP ONE: I was photographing the eyes of my newborn, Annalise. However, as she turned away, I took a photo that I found compelling—it puts the viewer in the same perspective as the baby. The lighting was an incandescent lamp with a 60-watt bulb. The light was so soft because the lamp was all the way across the room. This is a perfect example of all of the features of this 45mm lens coming together to craft a photo. I took this photo handheld using the Vibration Compensation (VC) feature at 1/30 of a second, plus it takes advantage of the close focusing ability of the lens and was shot wide open at F/1.8. The selective depth-of-field is also nice, though it can be challenging to figure out which part of the image you want sharp in a photo like this.

**LENS USED:**

SP 45mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/16, 1/30th sec.

TITLE:

Sunflower

TIP TWO: This photo fully takes advantage of the 45mm's Vibration Compensation (VC) to let you stop down the lens—in this case to F/16, to achieve maximum depth-of-field. The closer you get to the subject, the less depth-of-field your image has, so being able to stop down can offer you the depth-of-field you're looking for. The problem, however, is that the shutter speed gets slower as a result. In the case of this flower, 1/30th of a second with a 45mm lens would have been difficult to handhold without that VC feature.

TIP THREE: The quality of light from the overcast afternoon provided a beautiful, soft light source on my subject here, but there wasn't much in the way of color in the image. I'll often choose black and white when color is either distracting or not a significant part of the image. This is one of those cases where the viewer is able to connect much more with the subject in black and white. The way the tones get converted to highlight specific parts of the image is a function of what channels are used in the conversion from the color image. Using the blue filter here to convert the image to black and white in Lightroom brought out the complementary (orange) color of my subject's freckles. Using a selective narrow depth-of-field is also a terrific way to direct the viewer's attention to the subject. Usually, if there's one part of a portrait that's in focus, you want to make sure it's the eyes.



LENS USED:

SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/2.2, 1/320th sec.

TITLE:

Freckles

TIP FOUR: Certain images can be intriguing if they make you ask a question or capture a particular moment or a mood. And I think there's something that can translate real experiences when you approach situations and subjects as an observer. During this game of hide-and-seek, I caught just such a moment—one that reminded me what it's like to be 9 again. I like the fact that my subject is inhabiting the space between two types of vegetation, with an expression that makes me wonder what he's really thinking.



LENS USED:

SP 45mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/3.5, 1/640th sec.

TITLE:

Hide-and-Seek

**LENS USED:**

SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/2.0, 1/100th sec.

TITLE:

Chillaxing

TIP FIVE: This is a portrait of a friend's daughter, whom I've been photographing since she was born. By now she's used to the fact that I photograph her virtually every time I see her, which is now once or twice a year. I was visiting them and she was lying down on the couch, lit by an overhead lamp. When I saw her perfectly illuminated like that, I told her not to move while I got my camera, which was a few rooms away. When I returned, she was exactly in the same position. I photographed her from several different angles. In an attempt to educate an 8-year-old, I asked, "Do you know what makes a great photograph?" Her answer: "Great lighting." I didn't figure that out until I was in my 20s.

**LENS USED:**

SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/3.5, 1/500th sec.

TITLE:

Off to School

TIP SIX: I've found that trying to take images of young children is sometimes difficult, because they're always making goofy faces or running away when you lift up the camera. Giving them an activity to do is often the easiest way to capture some truly candid moments. I was dropping a friend's daughter off at school when we encountered this (almost) puddle. And what kid doesn't like jumping in puddles? Very little coaxing was necessary. I managed to capture three attempts of her jumping in the puddle; this image was at the end of the jump. The 1/500th of a second shutter speed is the slowest I would use to freeze the action in a situation like this.

TIP SEVEN: This is one of about 100 images I shot one afternoon last summer while wandering among some wildflowers. Even though I wouldn't consider myself a "macro photographer," per se, I love the feeling of getting lost while taking pictures, completely absorbed in observing. It's one of the greatest joys of photography. One of the best features of the Tamron 35mm lens is the ability to shoot macro images at 1:2.3 (or roughly 1/2 life-size). Because the depth-of-field is so thin and shooting macro magnifies such a tiny area, you can take many images that look completely different in just one concentrated area.



LENS USED:
SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:
Exposure: F/2.0, 1/125th sec.

TITLE:
Wild for Wildflowers

TIP EIGHT: One of the great things about prime lenses like the 35mm and 45mm is that they're fixed, which leads to that creativity I talked about earlier. Here, for instance, I was using the 35mm and experimenting with capturing images at F/1.8 and getting the placement of the sharpness right. Sometimes it's a necessity to shoot at F/1.8 because of the amount of light in a scene, but in this case I had plenty of light—it was simply an exercise to shoot wide open. Perspective is one way to give your subjects presence. These flowers were pretty tiny, so I made sure to get below them to give them the appearance of being more immense than they actually were.



LENS USED:
SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:
Exposure: F/1.8, 1/3200th sec.

TITLE:
Floral B&W #1



TIP NINE: It's always striking when you show something sharp against something soft, like in this second black-and-white photo. There are three ways in photography to achieve that narrow depth-of-field in the camera, and combining any of them intensifies that effect. First, the closer you are to a subject, the less depth-of-field you have, which means macro lenses have the least depth-of-field. Wider apertures also reduce depth-of-field, so lenses at F/1.8 have less depth-of-field than "slower" lenses. The last factor that affects the amount of focus is focal length, with longer focal lengths having less depth-of-field due to their magnifying abilities. In this case, by combining two of those methods—shooting at F/1.8 and at a close focusing distance of 7.9 inches—I was able to achieve a very narrow depth-of-field to get the effect that I was looking for.

LENS USED:

SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/1.8, 1/5000th sec.

TITLE:

Floral B&W #2



LENS USED:

SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/2.8, 1/640th sec.

TITLE:

Dock on South Hero Island, Vermont

TIP TEN: My in-laws have a cabin right on Lake Champlain, which is where I captured this image of a boy in his inner tube. Sometimes photography can be an exercise in the art of observing—in other words, taking pictures of the things you see without manipulating the scene. That's what I tried to do here. When looking at things from a journalistic point of view, the choices of what to include or exclude from the frame are the elements that create the narrative or give context. For example, including the arm of the man on the right but not the man himself, or perhaps choosing to crop the man, influences the viewer's relationship to the main subject in the image.



LENS USED:

SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/1.8, 30 sec.

TITLE:

Vacated In Vermont

TIP ELEVEN: This image of an abandoned house was taken two hours after sunset. Your eye would have seen it much darker if you were there in person. The thing is, there's almost always enough light to take an image if you have enough time. I took this photo on a tripod with the 35mm lens wide open and a 30-second exposure, manually focused to infinity at ISO 800. I used a flashlight to paint the house with light to give exposure to an otherwise silhouetted image. The light was off to the right, giving the bales of hay added depth. This is one of those photos that could have really only been taken with the 35mm at F/1.8 to get it looking like this. With an F/2.8 lens, for example, the ISO would have had to have been 3200 to get the same exposure, which would have introduced more noise to the image. Also, the Vibration Compensation (VC) was actually off in this image, as most manufacturers recommend deactivating the image stabilizer when on a tripod for long exposures.

**LENS USED:**

SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:

Exposure: F/2.5, 1/125th sec.

TITLE:

The Eyes Have It

TIP TWELVE: This is my daughter, Annalise, again, this time at 3 months old. In this photo she's being lit by window light, with the main one about 2 meters from her right (the viewer's left), as seen from the reflection, or catchlight, in her eyes. There's no direct sunlight coming through the window, which makes it a soft source, resulting in smooth transitions between the shadow and highlights. That kind of light also makes the skin look soft and brings out the color in her eyes. Ever since Annalise was born, she's always responded to the camera by looking right into it—at least for those few seconds when it's in her face. Because our eyes are attracted to points of contrast, having a catchlight in the eye also creates a distinct point that allows us to connect to the subject.

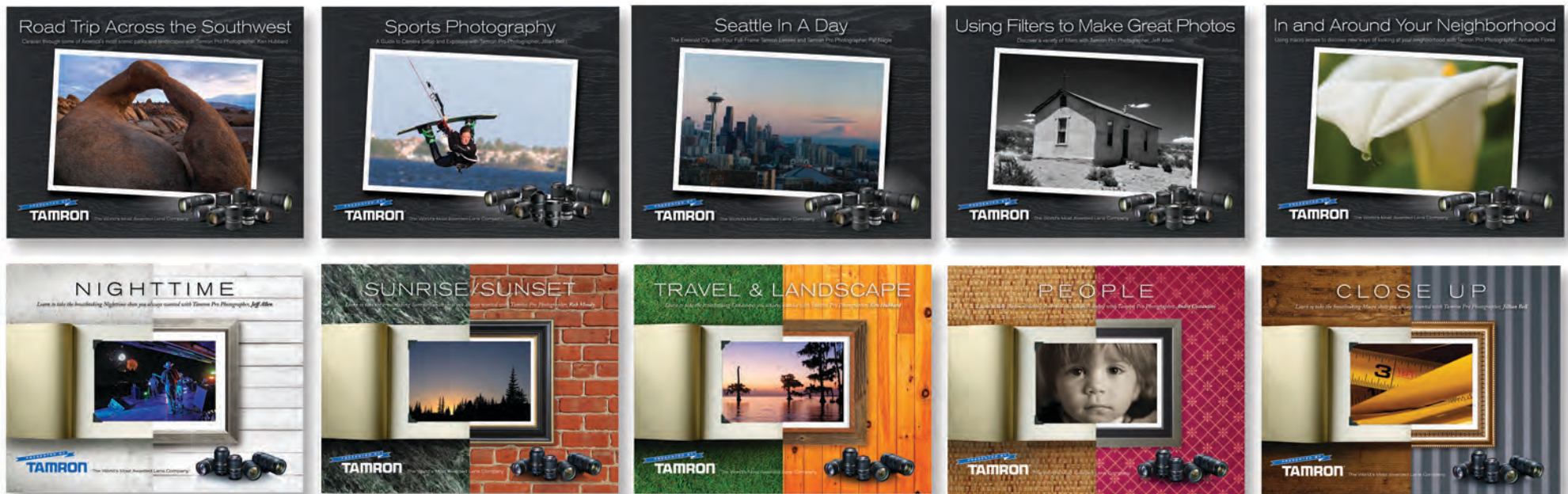
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